



WAR AND PEACE IN MALI
BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVES

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Names and abbreviations

ADEMA	Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali (Alliance for Democracy in Mali)
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali (La Mission internationale de soutien au Mali sous conduite africaine, MISMA)
Ansar Dine	Defenders of the Faith
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb
ATT	Amadou Toumani Touré
AU	African Union
CDR	Comité Nationale de la Dialogue et la Reconciliation (National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation)
CEMOC	Comité d'Etat-Major Opérationnel Conjoint (joint military staff committee)
CEDEAO	La Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS)
CNRDRE	Le Comité National pour le Redressement de la Démocratie et la Restauration de l'État (National Committee for the Recovery of Democracy and Restoration of the State)
COPAM	La Coalition des organisations patriotiques du Mali (Coalition of Patriotic Organizations of Mali)
FDR	Front uni pour la sauvegarde de la Démocratie et la République (United Front to Safeguard Democracy and the Republic)
Ganda Koy	Masters of the Earth, local Songhai militia
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat)
HCA	Haut Conseil de l'Azawad (Supreme Council for Azawad)
HCUA	Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (High Council for the Unity of Azawad)
IBK	Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta
MIA	Mouvement Islamique de l'Azawad (Islamic Movement of Azawad)
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission

MNA	Mouvement National de l'Azawad (the National Movement of the Azawad)
MNLA	Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)
MPA	Mouvement Populaire pour de l'Azaouad (Azaouad People's Movement)
MP 22	Mouvement Populaire du 22 Mars (People's Movement of 22 March)
MUJAO	Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa)
PIRIN	Programme d'Urgence pour la Réduction de l'Insécurité et la Lutte contre le Terrorisme dans le Nord-Mali (Emergency Programme for the Reduction of Insecurity and the Struggle against Terrorism in Northern Mali)
PSPSDN	Programme Spécial pour la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement du Nord-Mali

Abstract¹

On 25 April 2013, the UN Security Council established a 12,600-strong peacekeeping force for Mali. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission will take over and continue the security and stabilization mission initiated in January 2013 by the French-led military operation carried out in cooperation with the UN African-led International Support Mission to Mali.

The aim of this report is to present a number of long- and short-term perspectives for the recently initiated peace- and state-building process in Mali by focusing on the historical, structural and political causes of the crisis in the country. Understanding these causes and handling the resulting potentials for conflict are the minimum prerequisites for establishing long-term peace.

The report is structured along the lines of four interlinked conflict potentials: the fragility of the Malian state, the status and background of the Tuareg rebellion, organized crime and regional cooperation. The first part of the report focuses on the political crisis in Mali after the military coup on 22 March 2012, on the gradual fragmentation of Mali's democratic institutions and on the political divisions in Bamako before the election in July 2013. The second part emphasizes the conditions for dialogue and reconciliation, in particular with regard to the Tuareg rebellion and the status of the northern regions. The Tuareg rebellion has a long history and is a sensitive issue for the future stability of the country, not least due to disagreement in Bamako on how to engage with the armed Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad. The third part of the report looks at organized crime and its challenges to a future peace-building process, as well as the importance of creating income-generating opportunities in the northern parts of the country. The final part argues that international and regional actors have also played a central role in the escalation of the crisis and that it is therefore necessary to improve regional cooperation in order to handle the complex transnational security situation involving militant Islamist groups and organized crime in the region.

¹ This report was written in June 2013 before the election of president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in August 2013. An analysis of the elections, the insertion of the UN peacekeeping force and the effect of these events on the situation in Mali are beyond the scope of this report.

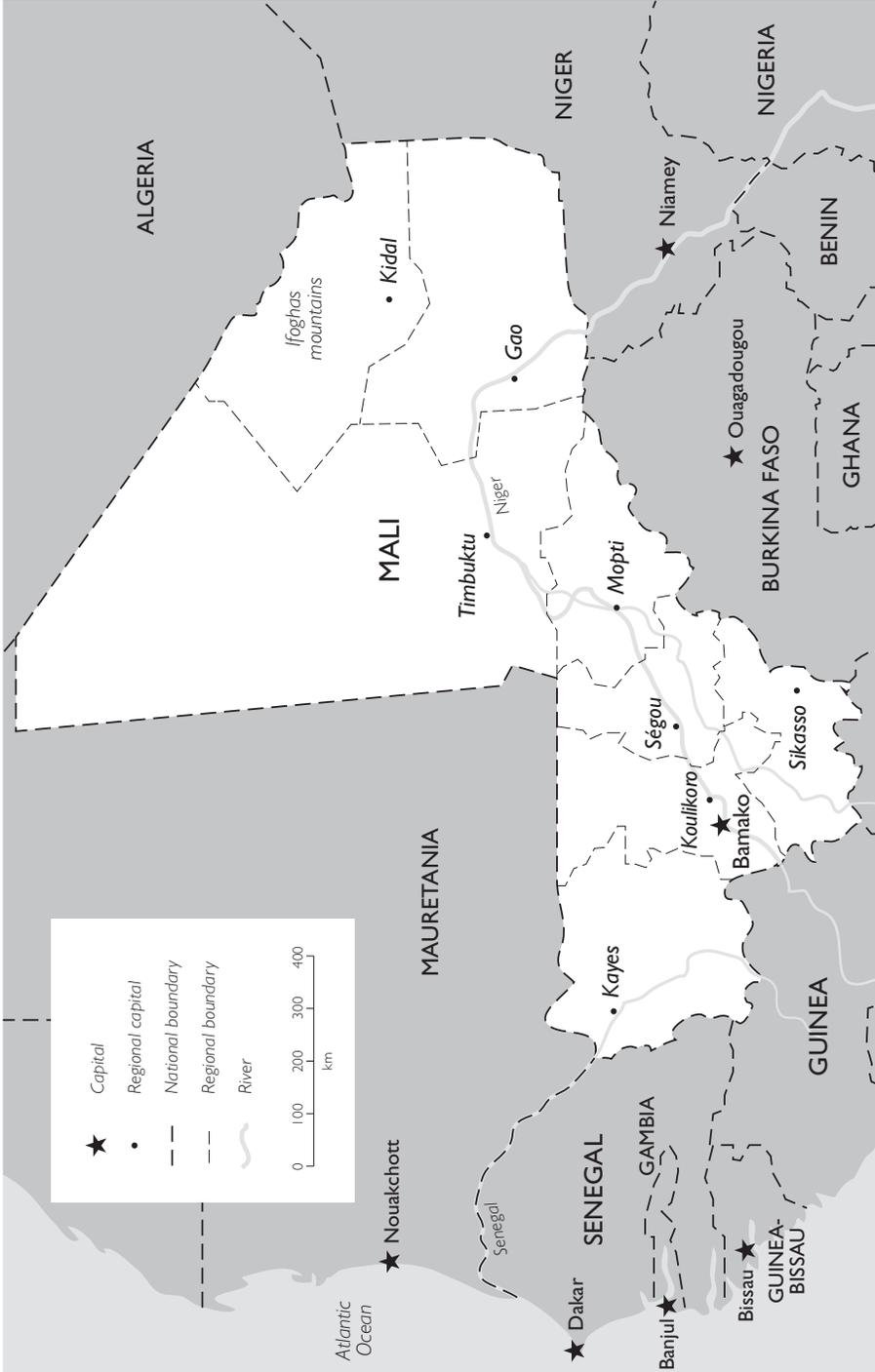
Introduction

On 25 April 2013, the UN Security Council established a 12,600-strong peacekeeping force, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA), to be sent to Mali partly to take over and continue the work initiated in January 2013 by the French military intervention, Operation Serval, in cooperation with the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). The initial aim of Operation Serval was to defeat the militant Islamist groups that had controlled over two-thirds of the country since spring 2012 and to restore the Malian army's control in the north of the country. Furthermore, AFISMA was to work closely with the international actors involved, namely the UN, EU and African Union (AU), to help rebuild Mali's defence and security forces. The French force fairly quickly gained the upper hand in the north of Mali, and the militant Islamist groups were expelled from the towns. However, despite much improved security in the north, the region remains unstable. Clashes with militant groups continue in the surrounding Ifoghas Mountains in the Kidal region in the north, and there have been a series of suicide bombings and attacks on strategic targets in northern towns. Nonetheless France has started to withdraw its troops, with a view to MINUSMA carrying on the peace and stabilization process from 1 July 2013. Of the original 4,000 French soldiers who were dispatched, 1,000 are to stay in Mali to assist the peace-keeping force by performing security-related tasks. In addition to these security-related tasks for establishing stability, which include the protection of civilians, the protection of human rights and the creation of conditions for the provision of humanitarian aid, MINUSMA's mission is to support the political process in Mali, restore state authority and prepare for free, inclusive and peaceful elections (UN Security Council 2013).

The ambitious goal of securing peace and rebuilding the state invites us to examine the central challenges facing the country and the underlying causes of the territorial and political crisis in Mali² that need to be dealt with as a minimum prerequisite for the establishment of lasting peace by its government and the international community.

The goal of this report is to present a number of perspectives for the long-term peace- and state-building process by focusing on the underlying structural and political causes of the crisis.

² By territorial crisis, I mean the Malian state losing control of two-thirds of the country's territory to armed rebels. By political crisis, I mean the military coup of 22 March 2012 and the ensuing political unrest. The word 'crisis' is subsequently used to denote the overall situation in Mali since the armed rebellion started in January 2012.



The armed Tuareg rebellion in January 2012 triggered off Mali's political and territorial crisis and had far-reaching consequences for security in the region. In the wake of the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya in August 2011, heavily armed, military-trained Tuareg fighters returned to Mali after fighting in the war in Libya. A number of Tuareg joined paramilitary groups that took control of Mali's northern regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.³ The Tuareg rebellion was soon taken over by militant Islamist groups, who occupied the northern regions for ten months during 2012.

After being considered a promising example of democracy in Africa for nearly twenty years, the regime of democratically elected President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) was overthrown in a military coup on 22 March 2012. The coup was led Haya Sanogo, who represented a group of young officers in the Malian Army. The coup and the subsequent political crisis in the capital Bamako laid bare the gradual fragmentation of state institutions, the pervasive corruption and misuse of power, which for years had been ignored by the international community. Poor governance at the local and national levels aggravated the crisis in Mali until it culminated in the French-led intervention in January 2013.

The local dynamics of the crisis and its historical prerequisites reach deeper than the threat of terror, which is often seen as the focal issue of the military operation in Mali. The gradual fragmentation of political and social institutions in Mali has also furthered a process of social, economic and political marginalization in the north of the country, which is reflected, among other things, in the recurring Tuareg rebellions and ethnic tensions between the different peoples in the north. Furthermore, the absence of state authority to provide security and basic services, together with the corruption of the political and military elite and their involvement in criminal networks, have allowed military groups to operate and develop their capacity in northern Mali.

This report argues that the causes of the crisis in Mali should be seen in the context of existing local and historical conflicts. Regional foreign and security policy also played a role in the escalation of the crisis and the way it was (or was not) handled. For this reason, the report briefly outlines the role played by central regional actors – the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Algeria and Mauritania – in the unfolding of the crisis, and what role they ought to play in the security policy arena in the future.

³ We know that both men and weapons made their way from Libya to Mali, though there are no verified figures for the precise numbers of men and weapons involved.

Tuareg rebellion

The Tuareg rebellion that initiated the crisis in January 2012 is only the most recent phase in a protracted and complicated historical conflict that started in 1963 and includes the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s and recurring rebellions in 2006 and 2009.

Each Tuareg uprising started in the Kidal region in northern Mali and was led by a small military elite from the Ifoghas confederation. This group in particular has formulated the ideological and cultural content of the Tuareg separatist movement and, in particular, defined it as a military movement.

Over the years, the Tuareg rebellion has mobilised among other Tuareg clans and ethnic groups, to gain their allegiance (including that of the Kunta Arabs). However, by no means all Tuareg agree with the Tuareg separatists and their repeated rebellions against the Malian state.

Peace agreements

In relation to the recurring rebellions, a number of peace agreements have been signed with the Tuareg, which have either been exploited or broken and have thus led to new unrest among the different Tuareg factions.

In 1991, Algeria tried to negotiate a peace agreement in Tamanrasset in Algeria, but the violence continued.

In April 1992, the Tuareg rebels signed a peace agreement - La Pacte Nationale - with the then transitional Malian government. Despite the agreement, the violence persisted and escalated into a civil war with the establishment of the Songhai self-defence militia Ganda Koy (Master's of the Earth) in 1994.

In March 1996, after a four-year-long civil war and major reconciliation efforts, 10,000 people took part in the Flames of Peace (Flamme de la Paix) ceremony in Timbuktu, where thousands of weapons were burned.

In 2006, Algeria brokered another peace accord, known as the Algiers Agreement, between the Malian government and the Tuareg rebels; however this, too, was followed by new uprisings against the Malian Army.

In June 2013, the leaders of the Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, MNLA) and Mouvement Islamique de l'Azawad (Islamic Movement of Azawad, MIA) rebel groups signed a peace agreement with the Malian transitional government in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. The agreement contained a commitment by the rebel side to respect the territorial integrity of Mali and to combat terrorism.

The report emerges from the Defence and Security research unit at the Danish Institute for International Studies and focuses on war and peace in Mali. Whereas Manni Crone's report entitled *De Militante Islamistiske Grupper* (Militant Islamist Groups) emphasises the militant groups and their ideology, strategy and alliances, this report examines the historical, political and local conditions that paved the way for Mali's deterioration into a 'fragile state' that lost control of two-thirds of its northern territory. The report also sheds light on the significance of these conditions for a future peace- and state-building process.

Sources and background material

The crisis in Mali is complex, and few claim to understand its causes fully (Lecocq et al. 2013). Moreover, the national political and security situation is constantly changing; positions quickly shift and new alliances are formed, making it difficult to present a complete picture of the current situation. Consequently, this report comes across in part as an account of history in the making.

Owing to the limited framework of this report, it has not been possible to carry out independent fieldwork on the Mali crisis. Nonetheless, diverse media, analysis institutes, academics and think tanks have generated a large volume of analyses and strategy papers. This report is based on this substantial body of work, as well as on my own detailed knowledge of Mali and the Sahel region based on eight months of fieldwork in northern Mali between 2007 and 2009, repeated field trips to Niger since 2005 and on telephone conversations with Malians after the start of the armed rebellion.

Structure of the report

As already noted, the report is structured around four key conflict potentials: the fragile Malian state, the status and historical background of the Tuareg rebellion, organized crime and regional cooperation. These potentials should not be considered in isolation, but collectively as mutually reinforcing factors. The report argues that understanding and managing these conflict potentials is the key to peace, reconciliation and state-building in Mali.

The first section focuses on the fragile Malian state. Particularly in the aftermath of the military coup in the capital Bamako, it became clear that the image of Mali as a relatively well-functioning democracy, which many, not least Western donors,

believed in for years, channelling substantial donations into the country, was based on false assumptions. With a view to the presidential elections and the prospects of rebuilding democracy in Mali, it is crucial to understand what has led to the gradual breakdown of state authority in Mali and to grasp the positions that are dividing the political arena in Bamako.

Another important aspect of MINUSMA's mission in Mali is to support the national dialogue and reconciliation process, a process that involves finding a solution to the Tuareg conflict, as well as improving relations between the ethnic groups in the north and between the northern and southern parts of the country. The report takes a close look at the history of the Tuareg rebellion in order to understand the driving forces behind their armed struggle against the Malian state. This section argues that the present conflict is different from previous Tuareg rebellions due to the ideological differences between the Islamist groups and the Tuareg and the fact that the various militant groups have greater financial resources and better weapons. These rebel groups consequently have a greater military capability compared to previous armed rebellions.

Another impediment to the peace process is the problem of organized crime in the north. Thus the report focuses on the economic base of the militant groups, namely organized crime and the numerous sources of revenue that have boosted the capacity of the militants to control and govern Mali's northern region in accordance with their interpretation of Sharia law. Access to these resources, including income from extensive drug-trafficking, the control of trafficking routes and ransoms paid for hostages, causes pervasive corruption in the government, the army and the local political elite and is a key factor in recruitment to the militant insurgency.

Last but not least, the report outlines the role played by regional actors, which is significant for future scenarios for resolving the conflict, made possible by the deployment of a UN-led peace-keeping force.

The fragile Malian state

The UN peace-keeping force, MINUSMA, was assigned the task of helping to re-establish constitutional order and, in particular, to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in Mali. In this regard, it has often been pointed out that the necessary conditions for peaceful and democratic elections are not yet in place, since 1) there is not yet peace in the north, where attacks on civilians continue; 2) the culture of corruption has not been eliminated; 3) elections will polarize the rhetoric and thus cause further division in the political process; 4) the expected transfer of large quantities of aid risks increasing the competition for political power; and 5) with 400,000 refugees still on the move, there is a risk of very low voter turnout, especially by the minority in the north (Mann and Whitehouse 2013). Here, it is important to understand how the political situation evolved in the capital Bamako after the coup d'état in 2012 and is influencing the forthcoming election process.

Coup d'état

Mali's porous political institutions became especially exposed after the coup d'état on 22 March 2012. The military junta, le Comité National pour le Redressement de la Démocratie et la Restauration de l'État (*National Committee for the Recovery of Democracy and Restoration of the State*, CNRDRE), consisting of a group of officers from the Malian army under the leadership of Amadou Haya Sanogo, carried out the coup and deposed President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT). One of the underlying causes of the coup was the army's frustration over the government's inadequate handling of the capture of northern Mali by militant groups. The temporary but powerful military alliance of these militias allowed them to beat back the army and drive them out of the north of the country in a relatively short time. This situation illustrated once again the army's lack of resources and capacity to undertake any proper action against the rebellion in the north. At the same time, the contrast between the corrupt political (and military) elite and the rank-and-file soldiers, who, despite inadequate wages and ammunition, were expected to risk their lives in the north, had become too stark. Growing dissatisfaction culminated in the brutal massacre of 28 soldiers by rebels in the town of Aguelhok,⁴ resulting in street demonstrations by the soldiers' wives, demanding better conditions for their husbands to defend themselves

⁴ It is disputed which group was responsible for the massacre and to what degree the soldiers were indeed massacred or were killed in battle. The TV station Al Jazeera documented its version of the story: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ztLfks3ooc&feature=share>

against the northern rebels (Lindell 2012; ICG 2012). However, the situation did not improve, and the army was finally forced to flee from the northern territories. At the same time there was growing resentment among the younger rank-and-file soldiers, the 'green berets' led by Sanogo, that the 'red berets', i.e. the presidential guard and parachute regiment, were being given preferential treatment by President ATT (ICG 2012). Tensions between the ordinary green berets and the privileged red berets was rooted in the fact that ATT himself had been in charge of the red berets in the 1990s, a position he exploited when he overthrew Moussa Traoré's regime in 1991 (McGregor 2013). The red berets thus came to be seen as complicit in ATT's corrupt regime, while political opponents of that regime look upon the green berets favourably. Criticism of the ATT regime also links Sanogo to sections of the student activist milieu of the 1990s, which spearheaded the anti-government protests of the time (ICG 2012).

The West African organization for regional cooperation, ECOWAS, quickly took action following the coup, both sanctioning the junta and persuading the junta leaders to hand over power to a transitional government under President Diaconda Traoré. Although Sanogo consented and handed over power to the civilian government of ECOWAS, he has continued to play an important political role in Bamako over the last year. The transitional government consists of 24 ministers, of which three are military ministers appointed by Sanogo. However, the government has not managed to establish an agreed political framework, and the political transition has been beset by conflict and disagreement (ICG 2012). The junta has mobilized grassroots support by capitalizing on the people's anger against the ATT government, with which the transitional president, Diaconda Traoré, is largely associated, having served as leader of the national assembly under ATT.

The weak position of the transitional government became only too evident when Traoré was physically attacked on 21 May 2012 and had to spend two months being treated in Paris. Furthermore, Sanogo demonstrated his power when Prime Minister Modibo Diarra was deposed in December 2012 and replaced by Django Cissoko, who is seen by many to represent the 'old political system'.⁵ The political unrest in Bamako has reduced the opportunities for recapturing Mali's northern territory. Moreover, as a result, the authorities have been more preoccupied by the power struggles in Bamako than with efforts to find a political solution to the conflict in the north. Nor has

⁵ Django Cissoko has a long political career behind him, including as Minister of Justice under General Moussa Traoré, before he became Secretary General to the President (1988-89). He also served as Secretary General to the President under ATT (2008-2012).

this boosted the legitimacy of the transitional government among the population. It is still not clear what role Sanogo and the former junta will play in the future. On 13 February, Sanogo was made president of the military committee in charge of building and reforming the defence and security forces, an attempt to pacify him by moving him away from the military camps and into an office in Bamako (ICG 2013; McGregor 2013). The role of the committee, however, is unclear, especially as it essentially constitutes a parallel structure to the EU training mission (Hall et al. 2013). Although the French military intervention has changed the political power structure in Bamako and has bolstered the authority of the transitional government, the political wing supporting the former junta still constitutes a central part of the political landscape in Bamako. This wing has caused much political turbulence in the capital, but it enjoys wide support among the population, since it presents several legitimate political demands.

The central political coalitions up to elections in 2013

During the intervening period between the coup and the creation of a transitional government, public debate in Bamako was characterized by disagreement over the military coup, support for the transitional government and negotiations with the groups in the north (Hagberg and Körling 2012).

According to Bøås and Torheim (2013), up until the elections, the political arena was split primarily between the Front uni pour la sauvegarde de la Démocratie et la République (United Front to Safeguard Democracy and the Republic, FDR), the coalition of support for the former prime minister, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK), and the umbrella organization La Coalition des organisations patriotiques du Mali (Coalition of Patriotic Organizations of Mali, COPAM).

FDR comprises sixteen parties, including the Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali (ADEMA), the country's largest party. FDR opposed the military coup and Sanogo and has also demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Diarra. FDR maintain that they are not represented in the transitional government and were not consulted when it was established. With regard to the question of reconciliation in the north, FDR is prepared to conduct a dialogue with the armed groups who are not linked to terror groups on condition that the territorial integrity of Mali is non-negotiable and must be retained. They also refuse to recognize the demands of the Tuareg rebels, believing that the Tuareg people have been well integrated into the Malian state by virtue of the 1990s peace agreement (Bøås and Torheim 2013).

The IBK coalition, which supports the presidential candidate, IBK, was initially part of FDR, but it broke away in April 2012. IBK shares FDR's opposition to the coup and Sanogo, but differs on the question of international intervention. IBK was originally concerned that France and ECOWAS would push through talks with the Tuareg rebel group MNLA. They are opposed to negotiations with any of the armed groups in the north and believe that neither representatives of MNLA nor the Mouvement Islamique de l'Azawad (Islamic Movement of Azawad, MIA) should stand in the elections (Bøås and Torheim 2013). Despite this, after eleven days of negotiations, a peace agreement was signed between the transitional government in Bamako and the two militant groups, MNLA and Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (High Council for the Unity of Azawad, HCUA) (RFI 2013b), on 18 June 2013. Nonetheless, the peace agreement is unpopular among the presidential candidates in Bamako and has met with considerable political opposition (Morgan 2013).

COPAM is a large political coalition close to Sanogo and his allies.⁶ COPAM supported the military coup, which it saw as an opportunity to restructure the country politically and as a way of cleansing the state of representatives of ATT's, as they see it, criminal regime. COPAM supports Sanogo's justification of the coup as a reaction to poor conditions in the army and years of disillusionment with the political class, but it is critical of the transitional government, accusing it of being made up of close allies of the international leaders, who lack a true understanding of the situation in Mali (*le Républicain* 2012). COPAM does not recognize the 'roadmap for political transition' approved by the UN and ECOWAS, which entrusts the transitional government with the task of ensuring the territorial integrity of Mali by initiating negotiations with groups that are willing to renounce armed struggle and establish democratic elections. COPAM has mobilized large demonstrations against President Traoré and originally supported a military solution to the conflict in the north, but without the involvement of foreign troops. In March 2012, COPAM stymied ECOWAS's early attempts to organize a military intervention. The organization's ideology is based on a form of African-Malian nationalism that stresses the prerogative of the black population to control the state and uses anti-neo-colonial rhetoric against France (Bøås and Torheim 2013; Whitehouse 2012b). COPAM rejects any form of negotiation with the rebels in the north, whom it believes should toe the line or face military action. The former Songhai militia, Ghanda Koy, which fought alongside the Malian army against the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s, is presumed to

⁶ COPAM was established on 6 April 2012 and consists of trade unions, civil-society organizations and four political parties, including the Mouvement Populaire du 22 Mars (People's Movement of 22 March, MP 22) (ICG 2012: 21).

be linked to COPAM (Bøås and Torheim 2013). Their radical discourse in relation to the transitional government and the ethnic groups in the north could undermine the national reconciliation process and jeopardize the possibility of peaceful elections. Despite this, the only option is to include COPAM in the political process, since any attempt to silence its criticism could simply lead to even greater political unrest in Bamako.

Corruption among Mali's political elite

For nearly twenty years, Mali was regarded as a hopeful and stable African democracy and was praised by foreign donors for its parliamentary institutions, free press and relatively fair elections. However, Mali did not become a fragile state overnight, and the military coup came as no surprise to the many international observers who for years have been pointing out the gradual disintegration of Mali's state institutions (Lebovish 2013; Whitehouse 2012a; Wing 2012). The international aid system has to a large extent turned a blind eye to the corruption that has pervaded the political system and undermined the legal system. The donors contented themselves with relatively free elections, the presence of the press and the ability of the ATT regime to absorb aid while presenting dubious documentation for its use (Whitehouse 2012a). The effects of this gradual disintegration can be seen in the poorly functioning education system, corruption scandals, the high cost of living and the high levels of unemployment.

Much of the positive discourse about Mali's democracy rested on the fact that ATT, a senior army officer at the time, led the efforts to topple the 26-year military regime of President Moussa Traouré in 1991 and subsequently handed over power peacefully and voluntarily to democratically elected President Alpha Oumar Konaré. ATT was hailed as a soldier of democracy, the hero who had helped to secure Mali's transition to democracy. After the fall of Moussa Traouré, Mali was expected to implement three major political restructuring measures, which with hindsight are virtually impossible for a weak state to carry through: 1) political democratization, 2) economic liberalization and 3) administrative decentralization. To a large extent, it was the way these reforms were implemented that paved the way for the present-day crisis.

Alpha Konaré, founder of the party ADEMA, soon gained a reputation as the defender of democracy in Africa due to his approach to the Tuareg conflict in the 1990s, even though corruption was also rife under Konaré's administration (Körling and Hagberg 2012). However, the rest of the world chose to believe that Mali's de-

mocracy was a success and ignored the obvious. Konaré was re-elected in 1997 and resigned in 2002 after taking important steps to establish democracy firmly, among other things through decentralization and setting up local government institutions (Kassibo 1997). In 2002, ATT himself was elected president as an independent candidate with support from a broad coalition of various civil-society organizations. He was known for practising a politics of consensus, in which he succeeded due to his personal skills and reputation. Nonetheless, several observers have pointed out that this resulted in the long run in the complete absence of political opposition (Camara 2011; Whitehouse 2012a). Furthermore, there were already signs of cracks in the democratic veneer before the coup in 2012 (Hagberg and Körling 2012: 114). According to Whitehouse (2012a), international observers noted irregularities during the presidential elections in 2002, but nonetheless ultimately declared the elections valid. Furthermore, voter turnout, particularly in the northern regions, was historically low for ATT's re-election in 2007, where consensus politics started to fall apart. Two alliances – ADP and RPM – each formed a front. The latter faction, represented by IBK, contested the election result and is standing for election in July 2013.

A major corruption scandal came to light in 2010 when the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria suspended its support for Mali because public service employees had embezzled millions of dollars to which the government, if not directly involved, had turned a blind eye (Whitehouse 2012a). Furthermore, the legal system had fallen into a poor state under ATT, as both the judiciary and the forces of law and order were open to bribery, and the latter provided little protection for the people. Widespread dissatisfaction with ATT lay at the heart of the relatively solid popular support for the junta, which according to one survey enjoyed 65% of popular support following the coup (Whitehouse 2012b). After the coup, accusations abounded that Bamako's political class and its associates had earned enormous sums of money from the illegal economy and that the government and parts of the military had accepted or directly participated in trafficking. In view of the impending UN mission and the major efforts by the international community to reconstruct the state and the administration in Mali, it is important to tackle the primary causes of the gradual disintegration of state institutions. If not, the international community risks re-establishing a paper democracy which could collapse like a house of cards and in which the population at large, and the minorities in the north in particular, have no faith. Thus the demands of the COPAM political faction cannot be ignored. Their analysis of the 'state of the country' under ATT is fairly accurate, although they do not always employ the most appropriate means to achieve their demands.

The fragile state in the north and perspectives for the national dialogue process

For the peoples in the north, poor governance and weak political institutions have generally meant the absence of the state, security and, not least, development in the form of infrastructure, investment in water, sanitation and education. Government failure in these areas has served to undermine state legitimacy in the north, heightened ethnic conflicts and caused structural poverty. Despite the extensive democratic decentralization process that was launched in the 1990s, the state has failed to consolidate itself and build up the capacity to perform its main tasks in the north. Instead, these tasks have been taken over by other non-state actors, which has led to certain social groups being favoured. Unequal access to public services has reinforced the perception of injustice and exclusion.

Restoring national unity, confidence and reconciliation between the different ethnic groups has proved to be a greater challenge than regaining the occupied territories in the north, but it is nonetheless a decisive prerequisite for a future sustainable peace process.⁷ There are now divisions between the state and its population, between north and south, between state and non-state institutions and between the different ethnic groups in northern Mali. Over the last few years, the absence of a central state in the northern regions has deepened earlier divisions between the different peoples in the north ('black' versus 'white', pastoralists versus farmers), and in particular between the northern and southern parts of the country. In the last decade, the gulf has widened due to Salafist movements, militant Islamist groups and trans-continental organized crime (Lecocq et al. 2013). The end of the civil war in the 1990s was marked by the Flame of Peace (*Flamme de la Paix*) ceremony in March 1996 in Timbuktu, where the opposing factions laid down their arms and burned them on a pyre. In spite of this ceremony, which was a strong symbol of peace between peoples, northern Mali and its internal divisions have remained an open wound. In connection with the latest conflict, many politically and historically rooted ethnic tensions have blown up following the French intervention, and there have since been reports of racial attacks on civilian Tuareg, Arabs and Peul from Mali's army (FIDH 2012). Many Tuareg and Arabs have said that they fear the Malian army and the Songhai militia more than the Islamist militants, as they single people out solely on the basis of skin colour and a desire for retribution. Many in the south and in the

⁷ The Songhai and the Tuareg make up the largest ethnic groups. The region is also home to Arabs, Fulbe (also called Peul) and a small number of Bambara, Bozo and Dogon. The Songhai people, who tend to be settled, are the largest ethnic group in Timbuktu and Gao, while the Tuareg are the largest ethnic group in the Kidal region (Sidibé 2012).

army make no distinction between the Tuareg and terrorists and blame the Tuareg for the collapse of their country (*The Guardian* 2013). At the same time, ethnic and racial violence runs both ways, and there have also been reports of assaults against the black Songhai and Peul peoples carried out by the MNLA and MIA in the Kidal region (*RFI* 2013c). Moreover, the rebels' declaration of the Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal regions as the state of Azawad has widened north-south divisions. However, accounts of these divisions often fail to mention that many of the same development and corruption problems also exist in the south of the country and that the elites in the north have close ties with and often depend on political relations with the elite in the south (Bøås and Torheim 2013).

The establishment of the National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation (Comité Nationale de la Dialogue et la Reconciliation, CDR)⁸ in March 2013 is part of the transitional government's 'roadmap to democracy'. The CDR has been tasked with setting up a dialogue with and boosting reconciliation for the whole of Malian society (République du Mali 2013). Despite the establishment of the CDR, there are still no concrete initiatives to mediate between the peoples in the north and the different sides in the conflict, including the army and security forces. The electoral base of the northern region accounts for an estimated 700,000 people, while the five other regions, including the capital, each have over one million voters. It is also difficult for politicians from the north to mobilize votes in the more densely populated areas in the south (ICG 2013). If the peoples in the north cannot support the future government, there is a danger of the population becoming even further divided. Furthermore, the problem of 400,000 refugees on the move poses a concrete logistical challenge. How will it be possible to include the many refugees who are outside the official refugee camps on the electoral rolls and thus ensure that these groups, who consist in particular of Tuareg and Arabs in the north, do not feel marginalized and deprived of citizenship or rights in Mali yet again?

Prospects for elections and democracy in Mali

On account of this precarious political situation, it is important to tread carefully when hastening preparations for elections and signalling that the political situation in Mali is under control. The political and military elite in Mali are caught in a legitimacy crisis and have helped to undermine the rule of law in the country. Thus sufficient time will be required to eliminate the internal problems in Mali and

⁸ CDR consists of 33 members from various groups in society appointed by the President.

stamp out the culture of corruption, which is not just about the greed of individual politicians, but also about social and structural factors that have allowed political leaders to abuse their authority (Whitehouse 2012a). The question is whether it is desirable to continue the status quo with the same actors at the head of the table purloining the state's resources from the Malian people, while donors settle simply for the restoration of democracy. The crisis in Mali testifies to the fact that the existence of political institutions and relatively democratic elections alone have not been sufficient to maintain a genuinely democratic political order.

Accusations of corruption have also been used to justify the coup d'état, and the support of the former junta continued to pose a threat to the political process both before and after the elections in July 2013, not least due to their discriminatory rhetoric directed at the peoples in the north. Steps towards reconciliation need to be taken that dismantle stereotypes rather than stir up discriminatory rhetoric. The peace agreement with the Tuareg rebels in the north dominates the political debate, and support for the agreement is the key to bringing about national reconciliation. In the next section, the report takes a close look at the status of and background to the Tuareg rebellion.

Tuareg rebellion: status and background

The French military operation opened the door for the armed Tuareg-dominated MNLA to come to the fore once again, after having been beaten back by the militant Islamist groups in spring 2012. The MNLA is a secular front. Owing to its detailed knowledge of the Kidal region, it was able to assist the French in their fight against terror in the difficult terrain of the Ifoghas mountains. As a result of the French military operation, the MNLA regained the Kidal region after the militant Islamist groups were more or less forced to flee. Unlike in Timbuktu and Gao, the MNLA denied the Malian government access to the Kidal region once it had captured it and allowed only the French and their allied troops from Chad to enter. The French victory in Kidal without the presence of the Malian army has turned the question of how to approach the MNLA and the independence of northern Mali into a sensitive issue, which, as mentioned before, also divides the political arena in Bamako. The MNLA does not feature on either the UN or US lists of terror organizations, but it is nonetheless an armed secessionist rebel group (ICG 2013), although it did renounce its demand for independence with the signing of the peace agreement on 18 June 2013.

Despite the fact that the MNLA are adept at communicating their nationalist demands to the outside world and presenting themselves as the representatives of the entire population of Azawad, which covers the three northern regions of Mali (Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, i.e. about 60% of Malian territory), not everyone in the north agrees with the MNLA's demand for an independent state of Azawad, particularly not the Songhai and Fulbe. Not even all Tuareg agree with the MNLA's demand for autonomy. Furthermore, there is disagreement among the most important military leaders in the Kidal region about whether the ideological basis for Azawad should be a secular or a religious state. These leaders – the late Ag Bahanga, Hassan Ag Fagaga and Iyad Ag Ghali – headed the armed Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s and today's MNLA and Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith), and they belong to the socially dominant Ifoghas tribe, which is the most powerful in the Kidal region.⁹ The leaders often switch political camp and form new alliances. In January 2013, after the bloody terror attack on the Aménas gas plant in Algeria, members of Ansar Dine formed their own splinter group, the MIA, led by Alghabass Ag Intallah, son of the present chief leader, (Amenokal) Intalla Ag Attahar. The MIA declared its willingness to engage in peace talks and has rejected terrorism and links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

⁹ All Tuareg rebellions originated in the Kidal region, led by the military leaders of the Ifoghas clan.

Since then, it has disbanded and announced its association with the Haut Conseil de l'Azawad (Supreme Council for Azawad, HCA). The HCA, which consists of both the MNLA and the MIA, was established on 2 May in order to create a common basis for independence talks with Bamako (*Jeune Afrique* 2013).

As previously mentioned, a peace agreement between the transitional government, MNLA and HCA was signed on 18 June 2013 in Ouagadougou. This agreement, which among other things grants the Malian army and MINUSMA access to Kidal, is a necessary prerequisite for implementing the elections in July. Nonetheless, it is merely one small step on the way, and a number of critical questions have arisen concerning the legitimacy of the agreement and the long-term sustainability of the peace. To begin with, many observers have seriously questioned the legitimacy of the signatories (Morgan 2013). On the rebel side, one of the signatories was Alghabass Ag Intalla, son of the traditional chief of the Ifoghas clan, Intalla Ag Attaher. The other signatory was Bilal Ag Cherif, secretary general of the MNLA. A key element of the agreement is the commitment by the Tuareg rebels to combat terrorism. It might prove difficult, in particular for Ag Intalla, to convince opponents about his position on this issue, especially since he stood alongside Ansar Dine, which was partly funded by AQIM, during the occupation of northern Mali by Islamist groups in 2012. Intalla's sudden change of strategy after the French intervention comes across as opportunistic, and many are doubtful of his ability to lead the Ifoghas clan to peace (Morgan 2013). Secondly, there is the question of how the transitional government could legitimately sign the agreement when the nature of the situation is that they will not be able to fulfil its terms. Last but not least, there is still strong political opposition to the agreement among the political coalitions in Bamako. If the government, which is to implement the agreement in the long term, does not recognize it or tries to ignore it, the agreement will suffer the same fate as peace agreements in the past. A breach of the agreement or a reluctance to implement it in Bamako would most probably lead to new attacks against the state by the Tuareg rebel leaders in the north. Moreover, we have previously seen that peace agreements have mostly benefited the military leaders, while other Tuareg factions have felt discriminated against. Discrimination has led to internal power struggles and new rebellions by the different Tuareg factions.

Tuareg rebellion after the fall of Libya

Although the significance of the fall of Libya should not be overstated, it did accelerate and militarize the conflict in northern Mali after a period of relative peace (Klute 2012). After Gaddafi was deposed in August 2011, many exiled Malian Tuareg left

Libya to return to Mali. Some of them had made a career in the Libyan army, while others had fought as mercenaries for Gaddafi or on the side of the Gaddafi rebels. When Gaddafi's weapons arsenals were opened in 2011, many weapons ended up in the hands of various militant groups, including AQIM. At the same time, many Tuareg groups competed with each other to acquire these weapons. Back in Mali, these fighters joined various military groups or the Malian army, depending on their ethnicity and social background (Lecocq et al. 2013).

In October 2011, the MNLA was formed by politically motivated young Tuareg from the Mouvement National de l'Azawad (the National Movement of the Azawad, MNA), former Libyan soldiers, Tuareg separatists who had revolted against the Malian state in the 1990s and 2006 and fought on Gaddafi's side in 2011, and a handful of experienced Tuareg politicians. The MNLA was led by President Bilal ag Acherif and the military leader Mohammed ag Najim. The MNLA claimed responsibility for most of the battles against the Malian army from mid-January to March 2012, although it is disputed who was responsible for specific attacks (Lecocq et al. 2013). At the start, the MNLA formed alliances with other militant rebels in the north (AQIM, Ansar Dine and Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, MUJAO); see also Crone 2013), but it was soon defeated, and the militant Islamist groups subsequently assumed control. Local recruitment to the MNLA was limited due to the fact that MNLA fighters had committed attacks on the civilian population. For this reason many felt that the takeover by the militant Islamist groups initially restored a degree of law and order, despite, in particular, MUJAO's severe methods of corporal punishment (Bøås and Torheim 2013). The MNLA did not have the military capacity both to recapture the northern towns and defend itself against the militant Islamist groups, who were fighting in the name of an Islamic state.

Iyad Ag Ghali, who led the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s, is also the founder of the Islamist movement Ansar Dine, which during the recent conflict has fought to introduce Sharia law in Mali. During the crisis, Ag Ghali's former officers from the Mouvement Populaire pour de l'Azaouad (Azaouad People's Movement, MPA) fought on the side of Ansar Dine, as well as on the MNLA's and the army's side (Klute 2012).

Allegedly it was Amenokal Intalla Ag Attaher who wrote off Iyad Ag Ghali as the leader of the MNLA, which was originally why Ag Ghali established Ansar Dine (ICG 2012: 11-12). It is not clear why his son, Alghabass Ag Intalla, later joined Ansar Dine. Some believe it was because Ag Ghali was better at organising rebellion than

the MNLA. Others believe that it was his father, Ag Attahar, who planted him there to avoid Ag Ghali leading the Ifoghas clan into an alliance with militant Islamist groups, an alliance which, in the long term, would wreck any possibility of negotiating a solution with the Malian state (Bøås and Torheim 2013: 2). Keeping a distance from the more Islamist groups has proved to be an advantageous strategy with regard to the recent peace talks with Bamako. Nonetheless, it is doubtful whether any of the political factions will react positively to the MNLA's and MIA's demands and any election candidates they put forward. Furthermore, it is questionable whether a distinction can be made between armed rebel groups and terror organizations. In this respect, France's support for the MNLA has generated massive criticism, which could easily ignite the anti-neo-colonial discourse and mobilize supporters of the former junta in the south. In order to understand the position of the Tuareg and the different political attitudes to the Tuareg rebellion, this report will examine the history of the Tuareg conflict, which is closely embedded in the geographical and cultural context in Mali.

Who are the Tuareg?

The three regions of northern Mali are home to about 10% of Mali's population: Timbuktu (681,691 inhabitants), Gao (544,120) and Kidal (67,638). However, population figures are inaccurate, partly because the nomadic peoples in particular have historically avoided population counts as a strategy to avoid state taxation,

Facts about the Tuareg

The Tuareg, also known as Kel Tamashek, originate from several places in Northwest Africa. They number about 1.2 million, of whom 400,000 live in Mali, making up 5-10% of the population of northern Mali. There is not one single Tuareg society, but several societies united by the common language Tamashek. The Tuareg are not a homogeneous group, but are divided into clans, who live in different territories and are traditionally divided into different social hierarchies.

The Tuareg social order is traditionally organized around the war drum (ettabel), which symbolizes power and the owner of which, the military leader, bears the title Amenokal. The Amenokal is the supreme chief of the confederation of Tuareg tribes and is elected by an assembly of the representatives of the most influential clans.

The powerful position of the Tuareg in the Sahara was reversed by the French colonization of West Africa (1893-1960). When Mali became independent in 1960, the Tuareg became a minority in the new state.

<i>Composition of the population in the north as a percentage of the total population of Mali</i>	
Songhai	7,2 %
Tuareg	1,7 %
Arabs (Kunta and Moor)	1,2 %
Fulbe	Data not accessible

Source: Institut National de la Statistique, 2009

compulsory schooling and modernization policies. Furthermore, the mobility of the population generally makes it difficult to carry out precise population counts. The figures here are taken from the article 'Population du Mali' (Institut National de la Statistique 2009).

The social structure of all the ethnic groups is traditionally hierarchical. In particular, the distinctions between nobility (*imajerben*), vassals (*imrad*) and slaves (*iklan*) still plays a central role in everyday relations and political life, although this distinction has been blurred somewhat by the decentralization of the 1990s and the influence of local politics on social political conditions (Gaasholt 2011).

More complex distinctions between the groups in northern Mali have to do with local perceptions of racial differences. In simplified terms, a distinction is made locally between the 'white' Tuareg and Arabs and the 'black African' ethnic groups, including the Songhai (Lecocq et al. 2013). According to Lecocq (2004), this social hierarchy, which is rooted in race and slavery, was reinforced during colonial times (1893-1960) owing to French collaboration with some of the Tuareg chiefs and because the French regarded the white Tuareg as an elite and treated them more favourably than the other ethnic groups. Although the French officially abolished slavery when they colonized West Africa, it remained a widespread practice, especially among the country's different ethnic groups. Only at the end of the colonial period (1940-1960) did the formal abolition of slavery resonate in the slaves' demand for equal citizenship (Winter 1984). Yet although in the course of history the different groups have fought and plundered one another, alliances and cooperation over the exchange of natural resources, for example, have been customary, and thus local political affiliations, alliances and family relations (including marriage) also transcend ethnic and social hierarchies (Cold-Ravnkilde 2012).

Within the traditional social hierarchy of the Tuareg, the nobility had control of the land and offered protection to their vassals. This hierarchical distinction between the

nobility, vassals and slaves used to be, and still is, the cause of power struggles, and the representation of the Tuareg in the different militant groups is also partly based on these social distinctions (Klute 2012). However, social affiliations are not the only factor: there are also internal power struggles between clan leaders, and affiliations in political groupings and alliances are dynamic and strategic, as the shifting positions among Kidal's leaders have shown.

Traditionally the Tuareg practise a liberal interpretation of Islam, although certain groups and individuals have recently been influenced by radical transnational religious movements (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007). While Tuareg nationalism has existed as a political ideology in Sahel since independence, Salafist-inspired political Islam has emerged in the last few decades, though no more among the Tuareg than among other ethnic groups. The advance of Salafism in the north can be seen as a reaction to a combination of various circumstances: 1) the South Asian Islamic movement Tablighi Jama'et starting to do missionary work in northern Mali in the late 1990s, which attracted, among other people, Ansar Dine's leader, Iyad ag Ghali (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007); 2) the establishment of the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, GSPC), the predecessor of the North African Al Qaeda group, AQIM, in 2003; and 3) the launching of the American PAN Sahel initiative, a programme for combating terror which focuses on military training in the region. Due to widespread in-fighting, many Tuareg from Ansar Dine saw the religious claims of the Salafists as a means to unite the diverse Tuareg clans, the different ethnic groups in the region and even Mali as a nation (Lecocq et al. 2013). In this way, the religious-political project offers an alternative form of authority to both Mali's national state, which has shown itself to be corrupt, nepotistic and incapable of ensuring basic access to services and resources for decades, but also to the nationalistic Tuareg movement, which has shown itself to be incapable of uniting the divided clan factions in Tuareg society.

History of the Tuareg uprising

Up until the colonial period, the Tuareg had political and military control over large parts of the Sahara and over neighbouring countries to the south. Initially, the Tuareg fought heavily against French colonial rule, but signed a peace agreement with the French after suffering several defeats in 1916 -1917. Although very little was invested in these desert areas, the French did have a certain fascination for the nomadic lifestyle of the Tuareg and wanted them to preserve their original way of life. Rights and access to natural resources have played an important role in relations

between the ethnic groups and the dynamics of local conflict in northern Mali (Cold-Ravnkilde 2012), as well as in the north-south division.¹⁰ Despite their fascination with the Tuareg life-style, the French colonial rulers were concerned about desertification and blamed the local population's extensive cattle- and camel-raising activities (pastoralism) for the impoverishment of the soil. Consequently, the French introduced very heavy-handed measures to control natural resources, with the aim of protecting nature against poor management by the local population. More recent research has shown that this hard-nosed approach was misguided and that extensive cattle use is one of the optimal ways of exploiting scarce natural resources in the Sahel, as it takes advantage of the seasonal and inter-annual changes in the availability of resources (Scoones 1994, Thébaud 2002). Despite this knowledge, however, the old perception still persists. New environmental policies led to pastoral grazing areas being converted into agricultural areas, which undermined pastoralism and forced many herdsmen (including the Tuareg) to switch to agro-pastoral practice. Nonetheless, being 'pastoralist' is still an important identity marker among certain ethnic groups; even though it does not always reflect their various livelihood strategies or the fact that most pastoralists are now more or less settled (de Bruijn and van Dijk 1995). Another measure introduced by the French was state control of the land. Consequently the local population could only claim land ownership through so-called investment (*mise en valeur*), which in practice meant cultivation. In this way, many pastoralists lost their original rights to use pasturelands. This hard-line approach to the local population and, in particular, the Tuareg, was reinforced after independence in 1960, when the military regime of Moussa Traoré (1968-1991) in particular regarded pastoralists as backward and unproductive and as an impediment to the modernization of agriculture (Benjaminsen 2000). Significantly, the regime dubbed northern Mali *Mali inutile* (useless). The hostile attitude of the new independent Malian state was the breeding ground for the first Tuareg rebellion led by the Ifoghas clan in Kidal in 1963. In concrete terms, the uprising was a reaction to the government's modernization policies, which focused above all on the enforced education and settlement of the nomadic groups (Lecocq 2004). The first Tuareg rebellion was brutally quelled. Since then the Tuareg, especially the Ifoghas clan, have felt increasingly politically, socially and economically marginalized by the central state and at the same time have been deprived of their access to vital natural resources.

¹⁰ The three northern regions of Mali – Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal – are situated in the Sahel region and are characterized by sparse and irregular rainfall (approximately 200 mm per year), as well as extremely harsh living conditions. Despite the shortage of rainfall, there are various grasses, bushes and trees that make the area particularly suitable for camel- and cattle-raising. The area is populated by nomadic, semi-nomadic and settled peoples, all of whom are more or less dependent on traditional farming, livestock farming, fishing and the trans-Sahara trade.

Furthermore, the pastoral groups have been pushed outside the sphere of political influence, among other things because of their aversion to the French school system.

The major droughts in the 1970s and 1980s forced many Tuareg from the north to flee, and they lost up to 50% of their livestock. The droughts revived the West's consternation over desertification in the Sahel, and aid donors collected large donations from the international community, while further attempts were made to regulate the local population's use of resources. Members of the elite in the towns were given seats on Mali's forest committee, which was notorious for its paramilitary methods (Degnbol 1999), while the peoples in the north paid the price in the form of harsher environmental policies and very high fines in proportion to their level of income (Benjaminsen 2000). Furthermore, many experienced an increase in corruption in connection with food aid intended for distribution among drought victims in the north, but which ended up in the pockets of the elite in the south, who built large 'drought villas' for themselves (Benjaminsen 2008). In the mid-1980s, there was large-scale migration of young men seeking employment to Libya, Algeria and West African countries. In Libya, a large number of them received military training, though many were also forced to return due to hard economic times in the late 1980s. Some of the returnees started the Tuareg uprising in the 1990s (Poulton and Youssouf 1998). This uprising was led by the MPA, headed by the famous leader Iyad Ag Ghali, who later formed Ansar Dine in 2012 (ICG 2012).

In response to the Tuareg rebellion, the then president, Moussa Traoré (1968-1991) declared a state of emergency in the north, and the army retaliated by carrying out atrocities on the civilian population. This led to further violence and a virtual state of civil war, which was compounded by the establishment of the local Songhai militia Ganda Koy (Masters of the Earth) in 1994, which represented a strong opposition movement to Tuareg nationalism. The strife continued until a peace agreement (La Pacte Nationale) was signed in 1996 in the Algerian town of Tamanrasset (hence the name Tamanrasset Accord). However, this and subsequent agreements have not been observed, and consequently the Tuareg have never felt that their demands for greater autonomy, social-economic development and cultural freedom have actually been fulfilled by the Malian state.

In 1991, Moussa Traoré's military rule was overthrown by future President ATT, who quickly transferred power to Alpha Oumar Konaré (1992-2002), and Mali was changed into a multi-party democracy. Konaré was, among other things, the standard-bearer for the decentralization reform, which also constituted a politically

pragmatic solution to the Tuareg conflict, since the reform accommodated the Tuareg demand for greater autonomy and self-rule in the northern territories (Seely 2001; Hetland 2007). During the recent political crisis in Bamako, the decentralization reform has also been used as an argument by, for example, the FDR to oppose the MNLA's demand for independence (ICG 2013). The FDR believes that the Malian state has already done much to distribute power in the country, and it also claims that many Tuareg rebels received preferential treatment from the state as part of the peace process of the mid-1990s, when the state launched a wide-scale programme to integrate former Tuareg fighters into the Malian army and to re-integrate returnees into their local economies (ICG 2012, *Le Républicain* 2012b). As a consequence of this special treatment, many Tuareg who benefited from government policy stayed loyal to the state, even during the latest conflict.

Decentralization reform as a solution to the Tuareg conflict

The decentralization reform of the 1990s is the main reason why Mali was considered to be a forerunner of democracy in Africa for many years, among other things, due to greater popular participation at the local level and the nationwide dialogue process that took place throughout the country to debate the civil war in the north. Decentralization did not fail because this dialogue was fruitless, but because it was never completed or effectively implemented. For this reason, the solution to the present conflict is not to return to that model, but rather to look at what the implementation of the reforms actually brought about.

It has been pointed out by several researchers that, despite the comprehensive restructuring of public administration brought about by decentralization, the local and municipal authorities did not replace the former regime's authority structures, but simply added a new element to the institutional pluralism of law and order in Mali (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2003). Moreover, official recognition of the so-called traditional leaders (i.e. village and clan chiefs) under the decentralization reform can be seen as an attempt to overcome a prevailing legitimacy crisis among popularly elected representatives in Africa (Buur and Kyed 2007). The aim was to strengthen popular support for democracy by recognizing the authority of the chiefs in specific functions such as local conflict mediation. However, with this recognition, the law neglected the fact that the chiefs had historically played an ambiguous role: they had organized administrative functions, yet at the same time they had also acted as representatives of the local population to the administration. Unlike previously, when the status of chief was most often inherited, the decentralization reform allowed

a village or clan council to appoint a chief. This change in the law has exacerbated the in-fighting among local leaders over the chieftaincy (Cold-Ravnkilde 2012; Gaasholt 2011). Despite their controversial status, however, chiefs used to play an important role in peace talks and processes in Mali. Due to the fact that the present conflict is more militarized than previous conflicts and involves transnational actors and organized crime, this time the chiefs have only limited scope for resolving the conflict. Moreover, developments in northern Mali have demonstrated that both state and non-state authorities have been dysfunctional and that both traditional and political leaders have lost their credibility and legitimacy owing to corruption and involvement in organized crime.

The decentralization reform has been heavily criticized, especially since it has primarily benefited the elite and merely strengthened existing power structures and patron-client relations, although it has also created the scope for popular participation (Hetland 2007; Lavigne Delville 1999). Since the Tuareg uprising in the 1990s, large volumes of aid have been channelled into the northern regions without reaching the local population. However, it is more costly to establish infrastructure in remote, sparsely populated areas and projects thus benefit relatively few (ICG 2013). Nevertheless, there are many indications that corruption at the central level is also reflected in local government. The decentralization reform has therefore not been able to fulfil its promise of greater local democracy, ownership and co-citizenship, even less so since it has never been implemented in its entirety. Nonetheless, as a political model, it still allows scope for accommodating the autonomy demands of the north, but must be backed up by economic investment in responsibly managed social and economic development.

Tuareg rebellion 2006-2009

Between 2006 and 2009 a new Tuareg rebellion broke out, primarily due to internal power struggles among the Tuareg, but also as a protest against the violation of previous peace agreements (ICG 2012: 3). The peace agreement signed in Algeria in 2006 turned out to be the source of the conflict between Tuareg separatists from the Kidal region led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga and units of the Malian army, mostly Tuareg officers from the Imrad class. The conflict illustrated the dynamics of disputes within Tuareg society between the 'nobility' (the Ifoghas clan and the Berabish Arabs) and the 'vassals' (Imrad). Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, a veteran of the 1990 rebellion, led the uprising in 2006 with, among others, Iyad Ag Ghali. Disagreeing with the way his fellow rebels approached the Malian government, Bahanga set up his own rebel group,

whose attacks against the military led to his expulsion from Mali in 2009. Bahanga was subsequently granted exile in Libya, where he planned the latest Tuareg military rebellion but was killed in a car accident in August 2011. The circumstances of his death are not clear, but it left a gaping hole in the planning of the new revolution, though not enough to halt the project (Morgan 2012).

Internal power struggles among the Tuareg have also been used strategically by Bamako to play each group off against the others. With the peace accord of 2006, state authority gradually declined in the northern region. According to many analysts, this absence of state authority has helped criminal networks and terror organizations to flourish in the region. Although the struggle of the Tuareg arose from a protest against marginalization and exclusion from the state, their complaints have recently become less clear and mired in internal power struggles and disputes over control of trafficking routes (Sidibé 2012). Participation in the war in Libya and its initial alliance with Al Qaeda gave the Tuareg rebellion a bad reputation among the local population in the north, a reputation the rebels tried to rectify when the French troops intervened and pushed back the Islamists.

The role of the Tuareg in the future dialogue and reconciliation process is crucial, and the latest peace accord is necessary to ensure the territorial integrity of Mali in the long term. Nonetheless, in Bamako opinions on the agreement with the Tuareg are divided. Many in the south make no distinction between the Tuareg and terrorists and did not accept negotiations with armed rebels in the first place. Others, including the FDR, were more flexible, but do not acknowledge the Tuareg people's demand for independence. It may have been possible to form a common front in May 2013, but the Tuareg project has nonetheless been characterized historically by ideological disagreement and internal power struggles. The Tuareg leaders have often shifted between the different militant movements and political alliances in the north. Thus the Tuareg cannot be seen as a homogeneous group. Furthermore, their struggle in recent years has become intertwined with organized crime, which concerns the more politico-economic aspect of the conflict potential of the crisis.

Organized crime in northern Mali

Following the advance of militant groups in Mali and the ensuing military intervention, the West sharpened its focus on the threat of terror from northern Mali. There has been extensive criticism of anti-terror programmes and the military intervention, since these ignore the financial and structural problems tied up with the drugs trade and the informal economy. To set about resolving the conflict in northern Mali, it is important first to understand the issue of organized crime, which often revolves around rivalry over control of smuggling routes and the acceptance of criminal activity by public officials. The kidnapping industry, and not least the willingness of the West to pay huge sums of ransom money, have helped to finance terror groups in the Sahara. To put a stop to the economic drivers behind the conflicts, an alternative peace process is needed that identifies what will motivate the criminal actors to join the peace talks and that also creates alternative potential sources of income. It also requires recognition of the blurred boundary between the formal and informal economies, and of the fact that the latter is deeply rooted in political structures. The question is how to create peace in a context in which the key actors include drug dealers, criminals and terrorists. There is a risk of negative effects if the goods and services that these structures have been able to deliver in the form of order, jobs and ideology are removed without being substituted by something else, since those involved will not be able to see the benefits of leaving the criminal network. Incentives for peace are therefore fragile (International Alert 2013). Tackling organized crime requires regional cooperation across the countries of West Africa and the Sahara, reforms in the security sector and the creation of alternative sources of income for the large numbers of disaffected youth in the region.

Crime as conflict potential

Organized crime and the structural economic aspects of the crisis in Mali – including the funding of militant groups, their recruitment and ultimately their survival – together with the widespread corruption of the political elite and its infiltration into the informal economy constitute a major source of conflict that involves two central challenges: Breaking down the illicit economy as the militant groups will continue their activities as long as there is money to be made by them. Developing the regions as the young in particular have very few opportunities to build up an existence and a reasonable income.

A number of researchers have reported that the traffickers are affiliated with terror groups in the Sahara, which use profits to purchase weapons and support terror-related activities. AQIM has allegedly been able to finance its activities through drug-trafficking, cigarette-smuggling and ransom money for hostages (Ammour 2012). Money is the prime incentive for most unemployed youth to join armed groups. At the same time, it ensures that the groups are furnished with an adequate workforce.

The other aspect concerns the far-reaching consequences for governance in the region of the link between drug-trafficking and corruption. Many state employees and political leaders are embroiled in organized crime and have bolstered their political and military positions of power using illegal income. In this respect, organized crime is seen as an explanation for the gradual breakdown of Malian state structures during the last twenty years (Lebovich 2013), especially during the last governing period of President ATT. WikiLeaks has revealed sources indicating that the government and the political elite have allowed the militant Islamist groups, including AQIM, to operate in the north, while they have lined their pockets with revenue from drug-trafficking and large sums of ransom money. Furthermore, the involvement of the government in drug-trafficking has also been an indirect way of handling the political instability in northern Mali. According to WikiLeaks's sources, the government has received large sums of donor aid intended for anti-terror measures, for example, but has used the money mostly to arm Arab and Tuareg militia in order to fight against rival Tuareg groups, such as Ibrahim Ag Bahanga's rebels. Furthermore, these militia groups have used their support from the government to gain influence and power in local politics in the north, and in this way ATT's weak regime has ensured its survival (ICG 2012).

In 2010, two programmes were launched to create security and combat terror respectively: Programme d'Urgence pour la Réduction de l'Insécurité et la Lutte contre le Terrorisme dans le Nord-Mali (Emergency Programme for the Reduction of Insecurity and the Struggle against Terrorism in Northern Mali, PIRIN) and Programme Spécial pour la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement du Nord-Mali (Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali, PSPSDN). While the first one concentrated mainly on developing the security sector, PSPSDN was directed at the local population. Both initiatives were based on the idea that security was a precondition for development. However, the problem has been that many regions were already hostile towards the national army, which over the years has committed atrocities against civilian Tuareg and Arabs (Sidibé 2012). Furthermore, the security initiatives created the impression that the state was prioritizing dubious security measures

steered by top-ranking officials instead of investing in economic development, which had been part of the 1992 peace agreement. Finally, the programme was personally controlled by the President without the involvement of the local population (ICG 2012:6-7). It could be argued that the state's inability to ensure the development of and access to basic social services had ultimately undermined its legitimacy in the northern regions, a legitimacy that could not be restored by focusing on the issue of security in the north. Lacher (2012) also demonstrates that one of the reasons why European and U.S. endeavours to rebuild security in the Sahel region have failed is that they were too focused on combating terror and thus neglected the problem of drug-trafficking and, above all, the involvement of political leaders in this illicit trade.

Character and volume of the drugs trade

Northern Mali has borders with Algeria, Mauritania and Niger. The 5000 km border runs through difficult desert and mountainous terrain, where it is virtually impossible to implement border controls. Cross-border trade is not a new phenomenon in the Sahara. This part of the world has always been a transit region for all kinds of goods on both sides of the desert (Grégoire and Labazée 1993). After the border between the countries was formally drawn following the colonial period, smuggling became a substantial part of the local economy. In the 1970s, a trade in foodstuffs such as dates and substitute milk powder from Algeria slowly became incorporated into a growing black market trading in cigarettes, petrol, weapons and drugs, including hashish and cannabis. In the late 1990s, the first shipment of South American cocaine arrived in West Africa, initially at the ports of the coastal countries, from where it was shipped on to Europe. However, with tighter controls on shipping between Africa and Europe, more and more drug trafficking started to take place over land. Shipments of cocaine have also reached Europe from airports in Sahel via propeller planes, while others have gone from northern Mali to Morocco, Algeria and Niger, and to Europe or the Middle East (Lebovich 2013).

In 2009, a Boeing 727 containing ten tons of cocaine crashed in the desert north of Gao. This spectacular event revealed the growing cocaine industry, evidence of which can be found in the streets in Gao, where neighbourhoods are called after the type of goods which are traded and where large new houses are being build.

For obvious reasons, it is impossible to put a precise figure on the volume of the drugs trade. According to available figures from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, approximately 60 tons of cocaine and 400 kg of heroin are smuggled through West

Africa each year, generating over 900 million dollars annually for the various groups (UNOCD 2013). In 2008, 14% of Europe's cocaine (approximately 20 tons), corresponding to a value of one billion dollars, was transported through West Africa. Of this, 500 million dollars remained in West Africa. By comparison, Mali's defence budget in the same year was 180 million dollars (Lebovich 2013). During 2010, 18 tons of cocaine worth approximately USD 1.25 billion was transported through West Africa to Europe (UNOCD 2013). However, these figures give only a rough estimate of the true volume of the trade, and the organizations combating organized crime may also have an interest in inflating the numbers with a view to fundraising.

Although many like to regard terror as a threat from outside, the population are both victims of and participants in the informal economy and the criminal networks that thrive in the region. The local population often has a more ambiguous attitude to the militant groups than an external occupation power. In northern Mali the tourists have long gone, and conflicts over scarce resources mean that many are abandoning cattle-raising and agriculture in order to earn quick desert dollars allowing them to get by in extremely hard conditions. Many of the militant groups, including AQIM, have been present for a number of years and have fulfilled a number of functions which the state has been unable manage. To understand the militant groups and how alternative structures of law and order are generally created in areas of conflict, it is important to examine how these groups create authority and legitimacy in the regions in which they operate by having infiltrated the historical and political conflict dynamics of power and authority in northern Mali. In order to consolidate itself locally and increase its legitimacy, AQIM, for example, has cooperated with the local population by involving them in their activities. Some locals are used as traffickers, others as informers, drivers, etc. and AQIM is seen by many in the north as providing a helping hand (Sidibé 2012). The fact that members of the local population participate in the criminal activities makes it more difficult to control these activities and distinguish between terrorists and the desert peoples. Furthermore, the absence of the central state in northern Mali means that the presence of these various actors has complemented the state's functions by offering some form of security, system of order and means of income. This alternative governance in the north does not feature in media reports about northern Mali, where terror groups tend to be described as originating from outside the country. The question here is: If everything worked so well before, why did the Islamists try to take over the towns and set up a new political order? Were they rash and ignored the warnings of AQIM's top leaders against occupation? In this respect, the introduction of Sharia law had the character of an ideological political project that cannot simply be explained in terms

of moneymaking. So even though organized crime is a central economic driving force in the conflict, it is inadequate to explain what propels groups and individuals into crime. That is not to say that ideological and economic motives cannot co-exist and mutually reinforce one another, serving to mobilize support for the militant groups. The ideological motivation to join the militants is linked to both the historical conditions for the Tuareg uprising and the fragility of the Malian state, showing that conflict potentials both feed off and reinforce one another.

Consequences of crime for peace

Organized crime is a central politico-economic conflict potential that covers two elements: 1) funding of and recruitment to the militant groups; and 2) corruption and the involvement of the political elite in the criminal networks. Moreover, the militant groups have involved the local population in their activities in order to boost their capacity. We are not talking about broad-based, mass popular support for the terrorists, but about individuals who see it as a chance for survival. If the pending peace process is to be successful, there must be an economic basis for people to make a living so that the young, in particular, are offered a real alternative to participating in organized crime. At the same time, organized crime constitutes a regional and international security complex in that the funding and survival of terror organizations depend on it. These criminal networks are transnational in character and operate in Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Algeria and Libya. Furthermore, there are powerful national, political, military and economic interests at stake (ICG 2013). Tackling this problem requires regional and international cooperation, which is the focus of the next section of the report.

Regional cooperation

Even though the causes of the conflict in Mali need to be sought in the local and historical context that has been the primary focus of this report thus far, regional diplomacy and security policy have also played a role in the handling and escalation of the crisis (Klute 2012; Lecocq et al. 2013). The most striking obstacle to combating terror has been the inertia of Mali's political leaders vis-à-vis AQIM and organized crime. Thus, the future prospects for resolving and managing the conflict in Mali call, above all, for a national response as well as national responsibility. However, during the period when the MNLA and Ansar Dine were formed in 2010-2011, the lack of regional cooperation over security between the countries in the region had already contributed to the deterioration of the situation in northern Mali. For example, regional action taken by the Algerian-led joint military operation centre called Comité d'Etat-Major Opérationnel Conjoint (CEMOC) to tackle the presence of militant Islamist groups in the Sahara came to a halt due to tensions between Morocco and Algeria and between Algeria and Libya (up to the fall of Gaddafi). European governments further contributed to regional tensions between Algeria, Mauritania and Mali, not only by paying huge sums in ransoms for hostages, but also by pressurizing the governments of Mali and Mauritania to release indicted members of AQIM in return for the release of hostages (Lecocq et al. 2013). In February 2010, the government of Mali released a prisoner from Mauritania, one from Burkina Faso and two from Algeria in return for the liberation of the French citizen Pierre Camatte, unleashing a diplomatic crisis between Mali, Mauritania and Algeria (*Jeune Afrique* 2010; Lecocq et al. 2013).

During 2012, the calls for help from Mali and the neighbouring countries of Niger and Senegal, who were worried that the crisis would spill over into their countries, were ignored for a long time. The government of Niger was particularly uneasy due to Niger's own history of Tuareg insurgency and the concern that Niger could become a target for terror attacks on account of the government's strategic cooperation with the U.S. (Bøås and Utas 2013). The efforts by ECOWAS, the AU and the UN were not sufficient to stop the crisis becoming critical in January 2013. ECOWAS sent the first proposal for military intervention to the UN Security Council in September 2012, but the proposal was sent back due to a lack of approval from Bamako, poor planning and concern that ECOWAS lacked the capacity to carry out the mission.¹¹ Only on 20 December did the Security Council finally approve ECOWAS's mission.

¹¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/12/us-mali-crisis-un-idUSBRE89B17U20121012>

Immediately after the coup on 22 March, ECOWAS and the president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, played a leading role in the planning of the regional talks and a military intervention. Blaise Compaoré was accused of playing an ambiguous role in the conflict, as he was conducting a dialogue with the armed groups while being involved in the release of hostages through his personal advisor, who is a familiar figure in Tuareg and Arab political circles (Lecocq et al. 2013). In September 2012, quoting French intelligence sources, *Jeune Afrique* reported that MUJAO had received shipments of armaments via Ouagadougou and that wounded MNLA fighters were receiving medical treatment in exile in Burkina Faso (*Jeune Afrique* 2012). The two influential states, Algeria and Mauretania, were opposed to ECOWAS's plans for military intervention and rejected attempts by Blaise Compaoré to mediate between the parties. In September 2012, Algeria initiated its own negotiations with Ansar Dine. Algeria had previously played a central role as mediator in the Tuareg rebellion and is familiar with the dynamics of Mali's internal conflicts. This time, however, Algeria refrained from taking a leading role in the military solution and continued to insist on negotiations. Both Algeria and ECOWAS tried for a long time to build bridges between the MNLA and Ansar Dine and were taken aback by the latter's decision to launch a military offensive against southern Mali in January 2013 (ICG 2013: 18). Algeria's motives for avoiding military intervention have been the source of much speculation. Algeria's own interests, problems and history have shaped its role in the conflict. AQIM originated as a national group of insurgents from Algeria who were driven out of Algerian territory by the Algerian security forces and subsequently branched out into northern Mali and the Sahel region. Algeria has been reluctant to use military power in Mali due to the risk of terrorism returning to its own territory (Boukars 2012).

Furthermore, Algeria has an uneasy attitude to Tuareg separatism, and this also plays a role in the country's own domestic political scene. The MNLA in particular, which was disillusioned over Algeria's tactics at the latest peace negotiations in 2006, doubted Algeria's motives (Boukhars 2012).

The diplomatic actions of the regional actors, with their varying degrees of success, show that the crisis in Mali and the Sahel region in general constitutes a complex mixture of national, regional and transnational security challenges that call for international and regional backing and proper cooperation between Mali's neighbouring countries if they are to be resolved. There is no question that Algeria should play an important role in the security mission in Sahel due to its significant military capacity and experience in combating terrorism, although it is doubtful how much

the country wishes to get involved (Boukhars 2012). Furthermore, other Islamist groups in Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauretania and Niger support the militant Islamist groups in Mali, but whether or not these countries' political and security systems have the capacity to tackle anti-terror measures is uncertain.

Conclusion

The French military intervention, Operation Serval, has altered the situation in Mali decisively: the northern regions have been won back and the security situation improved, though it is not yet stable. The intervention has also opened the door to the establishment of a future UN stabilization mission. However, the problems in Mali are still far from resolved. This report has presented the structural and political causes of the conflict in Mali. It argues that understanding and tackling the four concurrent historico-political conflict potentials, namely the fragile Malian state, the Tuareg rebellion, organized crime and regional cooperation, constitute the minimum prerequisite for the success of the future peace- and state-building process, which Mali is about to embark on with support from the UN peace-keeping force.

Corruption and the generally weak political institutions in Mali are a central challenge for the UN peace-keeping forces, which are to help restore constitutional order and ensure free and peaceful elections in July 2013. The section on Mali's fragile state painted a picture of the gradual breakdown of political institutions, which preceded the coup on 22 March 2012. The section also looked at the widespread corruption among Mali's political leaders and the political culture that characterized ATT's last period of government. With elections approaching, it is necessary to eradicate the culture of corruption and restore the legitimacy of the political leadership and its responsibility to the people. The continuing powerful position of the former junta and the tough rhetoric against the population in the north could sharpen the divisions between the ethnic groups even further. Furthermore, the situation in northern Mali is characterized by a lack of security and measures towards reconciliation. Thus it remains uncertain whether the necessary conditions for holding free and peaceful elections are in place.

The Tuareg rebels in Kidal signed a peace agreement in June 2013, though the politicians in the country's capital have diverging attitudes towards it. Without political backing for the agreement, the Tuareg rebellion will continue to jeopardize Mali's territorial integrity. However, any solution to the Tuareg conflict must involve all the ethnic groups in the north, not just the Tuareg military leaders: a genuine process of reconciliation is required. The historical and social conditions for the Tuareg uprising still inspire the Tuareg's struggle for an independent state. Nonetheless, the report shows that the Tuareg are not a homogeneous group and that all kinds of internal divisions and power struggles have made it difficult to find common ground in

their struggle for independence. These internal divisions and power struggles have also influenced Tuareg representation in the different militant groups operating in northern Mali. At the same time there are still many in the south who associate the Tuareg rebellion with the Islamist groups and their links to Al-Qaeda. Despite the fact that the Tuareg struggle has been characterized by internal struggles and has partly become entangled in organized crime, the Tuareg still have legitimate claims to greater autonomy in the north and fulfilment of the many peace agreements that have been broken in the course of history.

The extent of organized crime is still a major challenge for the future peace- and state-building process in a region where it is hard to see development perspectives. The third conflict potential focuses on the structural economic aspects of the conflict: the funding of and recruitment to the militant groups, the widespread corruption among the political elite and its involvement in organized crime. Economic aspects are the key to the involvement of the local population in organized crime. Thus, responsible economic development must be an important part of reconstruction and be given priority over security efforts.

In relation to handling regional security challenges, Algeria has an important role to play in regional and international cooperation, even though there are doubts about its willingness to play this role. Regional cooperation has been an important factor in how the conflict has developed and will be important for future perspectives. This section points out that a number of more or less fruitful regional security measures preceded the escalation of the conflict in January 2012. These initiatives were difficult to carry out due to tension between the regional actors and the West's willingness to pay ransom money. Furthermore, the motives of the various mediators and their ability to mediate in the conflict have not been clear. Regional consensus to resolve the conflict is needed, as are national and local consensuses. This report has shown that all three levels are connected, both historically as well as in the current situation, making the crisis in Mali such an intricate problem to resolve.

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Appendix I. Administrative structures in Mali

With decentralization in 1999, the new local government entities, *collectivités territoriales*, replaced the former 287 arrondissements, defined on four levels: regional, district, municipal and Bamako the capital, as outlined in the table below.

The overall objective of the local governing bodies is to further local or regional economic, social and cultural development. The law on decentralization recognizes regions, districts and local authorities, as well as local government entities, ensures the autonomous election of the administration and ensures the independence of the economic administration of the local entities. However, the law simultaneously preserves the authority of the state over local government bodies and ensures that no entity has authority over any another. The government-appointed authority (*préfet* or *sous-préfet*) supervises the elected government entities, implements national leg-

Territorial entities		Governing entity	Deliberating entity (elected)	Executive authority (appointed)	Consultative authority
Level	No.				
Bamako district	1	Yes	District Council	District Mayor	Ministry for Decentralization ¹²
Regions	8	Yes	Regional Assembly	President of the Assembly	High Commissioner
Districts	49	Yes	District Council	President of the Council	<i>Préfet</i> , appointed government representative
Municipalities	701	Yes	Municipal Council	Mayor	<i>Sous-préfet</i> , appointed by government representative
Villages/clans	5.500	No	Village/Clan Council	Village/Clan chief	Mayor, appointed
Neighbourhoods	n.a.	No	Neighbourhood Council	Neighbourhood Chief	Mayor, appointed

¹² Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Governments (MACTL).

isolation and approves grants of state funds to local development plans in compliance with national interests at the different levels. On the municipal level, the role of the *sous-préfet* has been redefined and is not just to provide support to the municipal authorities, but involves the obligation to report any irregularities, which can ultimately lead to the disbanding of a municipal council in the case of poor administration of funds (Hetland 2007: 12-14).

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